THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) The performance of private sector investment in many segments of the telecom sector, particularty after New Telecom Policy, 1999 has been generally satisfactory. The Government has, however, taken a number of measures to attract more private sector investment in the telecommunication sector. Some of the recent initiatives are:—

— Unrestricted competition introduced in the areas of basic, international long distance, national long distance, internet, V-SAT services, etc. In case of cellular mobile telephone service, number of operators in each service area has also been increased to four.

— Internet telephony has been allowed from 1st April, 2002.

— Policy for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has been liberalized. In some of the services like Internet, Infrastructure Providers, Voice Mail/E-mail, Radio paging, manufacturing, etc., FDI beyond 49% has been allowed.

— Electronic Hardware Technology Park (EHTP) Scheme modified to strengthen the indigenous telecom-manufacturing sector.

Compassionate Appointments

*626. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFROMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that dependents of some of the Section Supervisors of the Central Telegraph Office who died in harness in the month of June, 2000, have not been provided with compassionate appointment, so far;

(b) if so, the details of each case alongwith the reasons for the delay; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to finalize compassionate appointment in each case and by when appointments would be given?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.Two Section supervisors of Central Telegraph Office, New Delhi expired in June, 2000. The details about the compassionate ground appointment to their dependents are as follows:—

(i) Shri Om Prakash BR, SS(O); expired on 3.6.2000.

His son, Shri Bhupender Kumar Sahrawat's case has already been approved for appointment on compassionate grounds for a Group 'C post. He, "however, could not be givSn appointment for want of vacancy in compassionate appointment quota.

(ii) Shri Guna Nand Joshi, SS(O), expired on 10.6.2000.

His son, Shri Vijay Prasad Joshi's case was considered but was not found a fit case for appointment on compassionate grounds.

(c) The compassionate ground appointment to the son of Shri Om Prakash BR will be given as and when the group 'C vacancy arises in 5% Direct Recruitment Quota meant for compassionate appointments.

SAARC Information Ministers' Conference.

*628. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the resolutions adopted at the recent meeting of the Ministers of Information of SAARC member countries held at Islamabad to reduce and simplify visa restrictions on movement of journalists in the region;

(b) what follow up action has been taken by Government in this regard.